



NUNC COGNOSCO EX PARTE



TRENT UNIVERSITY  
LIBRARY





Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2019 with funding from  
Kahle/Austin Foundation

<https://archive.org/details/lycidasmonograph0000tuck>





# “LYCIDAS”

## A MONOGRAPH

BY REV. W. TUCKWELL

LATE FELLOW OF NEW COLLEGE, OXFORD

AUTHOR OF “TONGUES IN TREES,” “LIFE OF A. W. KINGLAKE,”  
“REMINISCENCES OF OXFORD,” “PRE-TRACTARIAN OXFORD,”  
“REMINISCENCES OF A RADICAL PARSON,” ETC., ETC.

LONDON

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

1911

PR 3558 T8

Una speravi tecum, dilecte Favoni,  
Credulus heu longos, ut quondam, fallere Soles :  
Heu Spes nequicqaaam dulces, atque irrita vota !  
Heu mæstos Soles, sine te quos ducere fleudo  
Per desideria et questus jam cogor inanes !



## CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	INTRODUCTION.	9
II.	THE ORIGINAL DRAFT	13
III.	ANALYSIS AND ILLUSTRATION	23



## “LYCIDAS”

### I.—INTRODUCTION

“IN *Lycidas*,” says Mark Pattison in his *Life of Milton*, “we have reached the high-water mark of English poesy and of Milton’s own production. A period of a century and a half was to elapse before poetry in England seemed, in Wordsworth’s *Ode on Immortality*, to be rising again towards the level of inspiration which it had once attained in *Lycidas*.” This verdict, so far as *Lycidas* is concerned, represents an estimate all but universal. “*Lycidas*,” says Tennyson, “is a test of any man’s poetic instinct.” The one notable dissentient from this view is Johnson, whose peevish, if lively, vilipending of the poem has injured not Milton but himself. A slave to the conventional style in poetry which Pope had made for the time triumphant, and in which he was himself a proficient, he saw in the ballads of *Percy’s Reliques* subjects only for mocking travesty, pronouncing Pastoral poetry especially to be “vulgar, easy, and disgusting.” His censure of *Lycidas* was met at the time by his friend Warton with a dignified and convincing protest: his admirers ever since have felt that it is best forgotten.

As a sacred personal tribute, *Lycidas* stands perhaps highest among the inspired elegies with which great poets have vented their grief for dearest pledges lost, for brother poets loved and early lost: it takes rank with Spenser’s *Astrophel*, Shelley’s *Adonais*,

## "LYCIDAS"

Matthew Arnold's *Thyrsis*. As a reflection of Milton's mental history it marks a parting of the ways: in the tender grace of the lament for the departed friend we have the sweet mournfulness of Spenserian melody: the suppressed passion of the outbreak against hireling clergy forecasts the prophetic period of political and religious rage, which was for twenty years to turn him away from verse, to transform the Cavalier poet into the Puritan zealot.

In the year 1637, **Edward King**, son of Sir J. King, Secretary to the English Government in Ireland, was shipwrecked and drowned in crossing from Chester to Dublin. He was a Junior Fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge, one of a brilliant set of Seventeenth Century "Apostles," which included Milton himself, Henry More the Platonist, and the Satirist Cleveland, little known to-day, but highly popular and widely read amongst his contemporaries. His friends agreed to embalm his memory in a volume of short elegies; and in 1638 were published *Obsequies to the Memory of Edward King*, thirteen in all, none deserving immortality except Milton's *Lycidas*, which came last. The autograph manuscript is preserved in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge: it has been beautifully reproduced through the camera by Mr Aldis Wright, and is here transcribed (pp. 14-22) in type, with its spellings, erasures, interpolations, and additions.

*Lycidas* was cast by its author in the Pastoral mould; a poetical artifice not yet extinct, and bearing in its past the stamp of many mints. It began rudely amongst the early Dorian settlers in Sicily, whose songs to their goddess Artemis took the shape of dialogues between shepherds or groups of shepherds. These were first formed into a branch of regular classic literature about B.C. 270 by Theocritus, a native of Syracuse, but resident occasionally at the

## INTRODUCTION

11

Court of the Ptolemies in Alexandria. This writer's felicity of language and descriptive force, flavoured curiously by his mellifluous Doric brogue, gave him a high place amongst Grecian poets, and caused him to be entitled the founder of Pastoral or Bucolic poetry. He realised, as did Wordsworth long afterwards, the *sweetness* of common life, and so gave us the *Idyll* in its varied forms. Some of his *Carmina* deal with subjects classical or mythological; one, the *Adoniasusæ*, reproduces with delightful humour the chatter of two Alexandrian ladies attending the Festival of Adonis. But the *Idylls*, with which his name is most closely associated, paint realistically the daily life of the Sicilian people. Shepherds converse in natural fashion about their flocks, their masters, their amours; quarrel and make up; contend in singing for a prize; lament the death of Daphnis, the typical Sicilian shepherd. Lovesick swains apostrophise the obdurate fair one; a town-bred girl despairs a rustic lover; a country girl yields to the rough but persuasive wooing of a likely neighbour lad; fishermen, waking in the night upon the beach, recount to one another their dreams; the every day experiences of country folk, simple scenes and incidents, fresh with the breath of Nature, are told with dramatic simplicity, exquisite beauty of language, and frequent touches of comedy. Of his contemporary Bion, also reckoned among the Greek Pastoral poets, the surviving works are few and fragmentary; we know him chiefly from a poem in his praise by his friend and pupil Moschus:

For when Sicilian shepherds lost a mate,  
Some good survivor with his flute would go,  
Piping a ditty sad for Bion's sake;

both poets are markedly inferior to Theocritus. In later Greek pastorals the poetic feeling is retained, but the treatment is no longer natural: nymphs

## “LYCIDAS”

and shepherds become allegorical vehicles for graceful sentiment, such as the educated lover of the country rather than its rustic occupant evokes from its sights and sounds. Virgil's earliest poems, which he called “Bucolics,” adopt this second and artificial style: professed and often close imitations of Theocritus, they lack the veracious country cast of the Greek idylls, fail to justify their titles as representative of rural life among Italian peasants. As idyllic poetry they are a conventional sham; but their perfect execution secured to them contemporary success, and enables them to be read with pleasure still. To the earlier poets of the Renaissance, their allegorising was as attractive as their melody: the Bucolics of Virgil were copied by Petrarch, Marot, Ronsard, and became text-books for the Grammar Schools, along with the not less popular eclogues of Baptiste Spagnuole, who under the better known name of Baptista Mantuanus is affectionately quoted by the pedant Holofernes in “*Love's Labour Lost*.” In 1563 a volume of English eclogues was put out by Barnabee Googe; and six years later Spenser impeded his wing on the *Shepheards Calendar*. Milton, who repeatedly borrows from the elder poet, here, as formerly in the *Arcades* and *Comus*, adopts the masquerade under which Spenser's first notable production was presented. The name “Lycidas” is familiar to the classic poets: in *Theocritus* (vii. 14) he is “every inch a herdsman, excelling all his peers”; and later in the same idyll (v. 27), “all say that no herdsman or haymaker is thy match at piping.” In Virgil (*Ecl.* vii. 67) he is a beautiful shepherd; in *Ecl.* ix. he holds a dialogue; Horace (*Od.* I. xix. 19) cites him as a delicate lad with whom everyone is in love.

## II.—THE ORIGINAL DRAFT

THE original autograph MS. of *Lycidas* was presented to the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge, by Sir Henry Newton Puckering. How it came into his possession is unknown. Buried amongst a host of other papers, it remained unnoticed until it was discovered by Professor Mason, Fellow of the College; and in 1736 it was placed in a handsome binding by Thomas Clarke, Fellow, and afterwards Master of the Rolls. Reproduced in photograph by Mr A. G. Dew Smith, it was edited, with a transcript into Roman type, in 1899, under the superintendence of Mr W. Aldis Wright. The manuscript contains, besides *Lycidas*, the *Arcades*, *Comus*, *Blest Pair of Sirens*, the lines upon "The Circumcision" and on "Time," the first sketch of *Paradise Lost*, with certain scattered notes, and sixteen sonnets. Five of these last, together with certain notes, are written by an amanuensis: the rest, including *Lycidas*, are in Milton's own hand.

The *Lycidas* is written on five sheets of pale brown paper, 12 in.  $\times$  7½ in. in size. Leaf 1 exhibits fragments of the poem, apparently tentative. In leaves 2 and 3 the text is full and continuous. Leaf 4 is only half filled, containing marginal references to one of the fragments on leaf 1. Leaf 5 completes the poem half-way down, leaving the rest of the sheet blank. The whole is written in a neat hand, blurred occasionally as by a thick pen or faulty ink. I have imitated the erasures and corrections as Milton made them, preserving also his punctuation. The omission of stops in the text is even more unaccountable than their presence.

## “LYCIDAS”

[These are fragments on a separate leaf, apparently prefatory attempts.]

Yet once more O ye lawrells and once more  
 ye myrtles browne w<sup>th</sup> Ivie never seare  
 I come to pluck y<sup>r</sup> berries harsh and crude  
before the mellowing yeare and w<sup>th</sup> forc't fingers  
 rude  
and crop y<sup>r</sup> young shatter y<sup>r</sup> leaves before  
 y<sup>e</sup> mellowing yeare  
 bitter constraint, and sad occasion deare  
 compells me to disturb y<sup>r</sup> season due  
 for young Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime  
 young Lycidas and hath not left his peere  
 who would not sing for Lycidas he well knew  
 himselfe to sing & build the loftie rime  
 he must not flote upon his watrie beare  
 unwept, and welter to the parching wind  
 without the meade of some melodious teare

[Here is a gap.]

~~Bring the rathe primrose that unwedded dies  
 colouring the pale cheeke of uninjoyd love  
 and that sad flowre that strove  
 to write his owne woes on the vermeil graine  
 next adde Narcissus y<sup>t</sup> still weeps in vaine  
 the woodbine and y<sup>e</sup> pansie freakt w<sup>th</sup> jet  
 the glowing violet  
 the cowslip wan that hangs his pensive head  
 and every bud that sorrows liverie weares  
 with  
 let Daffadillies fill thire cups ^ teares~~

~~bid Amaranthus all his beautie shed  
to strew the laureate herse &c.~~

Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies  
the tufted crowtoe and pale Gessamin  
the white pinke and y<sup>e</sup> pansie freakt with jet  
the glowing violet      the well-attird woodbine  
the muske rose and ~~the garish columbine~~  
with cowslips wan that hang the pensive head

x                          weare

and every flower that sad ~~escutchion beare~~      x                          weares  
 2 & ~~let~~ daffadillies fill thire cups w<sup>th</sup> teares      imbroidrie ~~beares~~  
 1 bid Amaranthus all his beauties shed  
to strew &c.

\* what could the Muse her selfe that Orpheus  
bore  
the Muse her selfe for her enchanting son  
~~for her enchanting son~~      did  
whom universal nature **might** lament  
when by the rout that made the hideous roare  
gorie  
 goarie his **divine** visage downe the streme was sent  
downe the swift Hebrus to y<sup>e</sup> Lesbian shoare

### LYCIDAS      November 1637

In this Monodie the author bewails a lerned freind  
unfortunatly drown'd in his passage from Chester on  
the Irish seas 1637.

Yet once more O ye laurells, and once more  
yee myrtles browne w<sup>th</sup> Ivie never seare

## “LYCIDAS”

I come to pluck y<sup>r</sup> berries harsh and crude  
 and w<sup>th</sup> forct fingers rude  
 shatter y<sup>r</sup> leaves before the mellowing yeare.  
 bitter constraint, and sad occasion deare  
 compells me to disturb y<sup>r</sup> season due  
 for Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime  
 young Lycidas, and hath not left his peere  
 who would not sing for Lycidas ? he well knew  
 himselfe to sing, and build the lofty rime  
 he must not flote upon his watrie beare  
 unwept, and welter to the parching wind  
 without the meed of some melodious teare

Begin then Sisters of the sacred well  
 that from beneath the seate of Jove doth spring  
 begin, and somewhat loudly sweepe the string  
 hence w<sup>th</sup> denial vaine, and coy excuse  
 so may some gentle muse  
 w<sup>th</sup> luckie words favour my destin'd urne  
 and as he passes turne  
 and ~~to~~ bid faire peace be to my sable shroud  
 for we were nurs'd upon the selfe same hill  
 fed y<sup>e</sup> same flock by fountaine, shade, and rill  
 Together both ere the high launs appear'd  
 under the ~~glimmering~~ eylids of the morne  
 wee drove afeild, and both together hearde  
 what tyme the gray fly winds her sultrie horne  
 batning our flocks w<sup>th</sup> the freshe dews of night  
 the  
 oft till ev'n starre bright that rose in Evening  
 bright

opening

toward heavens descent had sloapt his ~~burnished~~ <sup>westring</sup> weele  
meane while the rural ditties were not mute  
tempd to th' oaten flute  
rough Satyrs danc't; and Fauns w<sup>th</sup> clov'en  
heel  
from the glad sound would not be absent long  
and old Dametas lov'd to heare our song  
But O the heavie change now thou art ~~gone~~ gone  
now thou art gon, and never must returne  
thee shepheard, thee the woods and desert caves  
w<sup>th</sup> wild Thyme, and the gadding vine oregrown  
and all thire ~~Eeho~~ Echo's mourne  
the willows, and the hazel copses greene  
shall now no more be seene  
fanning thire joyous leaves to thy soft lays,  
as killing as the canker to the rose  
or taint-worme to the weanling heards that  
graze  
or frost to flowrs that thire gay ~~buttons~~  
~~weare~~ <sup>wardrobe</sup> ~~beare~~  
weare  
when first the white thorne blows  
such Lycidas thy losse to shepheards eare  
where were yee nymphs when y<sup>e</sup> remorselesse  
deepe  
clos'd ore the head of y<sup>r</sup> ~~you~~ loved Lycidas  
for neither were yee playing on the steepe  
where y<sup>r</sup> old bards the famous Druids lie  
nor on the shaggie top of Mona high

nor yet where Deva spreds her wisard streme  
 ay mee I fondly dreame  
had yee bin there for what could that have don  
what could the golden hayrd Calliope  
 for her enchanting son  
when she beheld (the gods farre sighted bee)  
his goarie scalpe rowle downe the Thracian lee

\* whome universal nature might lament  
 and heaven and hell deplore  
when his divine head downe  
 the streme was sent  
 downe the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore

[The asterisk refers back to the fourth fragment (see p. 15).]

Alas what boots it w<sup>th</sup> incessant care  
 to tend the homely slighted shepheards trade  
 and strictly meditate the thanklesse muse  
 were it not better don as others use  
 to sport w<sup>th</sup> Amaryllis in the shade  
 or with hid in the tangles of Neæra's haire  
 fame is the spurre that the cleere spirit doth  
 raise  
 (that last infirmitie of noble mind)  
 to scorne delights, and live laborious days  
 but the faire guerdon when wee hope to find  
 and thinke to burst out into sudden blaze  
 comes the blind Furie w<sup>th</sup> th' abhorred sheares  
 and slits the thin-spun life. But not the praise  
 Phœbus repli'd, and touch't my trembling eares,  
 on  
 Fame is no plant that grows <sup>A</sup> mortall soile  
 nor in the glistering foile

set off to th' world, nor in broad rumor lies  
but lives and spreds aloft by those pure eyes  
and pfect witness of all-judging Jove  
as he pronounces lastly on each deed  
of so much praise in heav'n expect thy meed

Oh Fountain Arethuse and thou ~~smooth~~ flood ~~fam'd~~ honour'd  
~~smooth~~ soft sliding Mincius crown'd w<sup>th</sup> vocall reeds  
that straine I heard was of a higher mood  
but now my oate proceeds  
and listens to the Herald of the Sea  
that came in Neptunes plea  
he askt the waves and askt the fellow winds  
what hard mishap hath doom'd this gentle swaine  
and question'd every gust of rugged wings  
that blows from off each beaked promontorie  
they knew not of his storie  
and sage Hippotades thire answer brings  
that not a blast was from his dungeon straid  
the aire was calme and on the levell brine  
sleeke Panope w<sup>th</sup> all her sisters plaid  
it was y<sup>t</sup> fatall and p'fidious barke  
built in th' eclipse, and rigged with curses dark  
that sunk so low that sacred head of thine  
Next Camus reverend sire went footing slow  
his mantle hairie, and his bonnet sedge  
~~scrav'd~~ ore w<sup>th</sup> figures dim, and on the edge ~~inwrought~~  
like to that sanguine flowre inscrib'd w<sup>th</sup> woe  
ah who hath rest, quoth he, my dearest pledge  
last came and last did goe  
the pylot of the Galilean lake,

## “LYCIDAS”

tow massie keys he bore of mettalls twaine  
the golden opes, the iron shuts amaine  
he shooke his mitre'd locks and sterne bespake  
how well could I have spar'd for thee young  
swaine

anough of such as for thire bellies sake  
creepe, and intrude, and clime into the fold  
of other care they little reckning make  
then how to scramble at the shearers feast  
and shove away the worthy bidden guest  
blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how  
to hold

a sheepooke, or have learn't ought else the least  
that to the faithfull heardsmans art belongs  
what recks it them? what need they? they are  
sped

and when they list, thire leane and flashie songs  
grate on thire scannel pipes of wretched straw  
the hungrie sheepe looke up and are not fed  
but swolne w<sup>th</sup> wind, and the rank mist they  
draw

rot inwardly, and foule contagion spred  
besides what the grim wolfe w<sup>th</sup> privie paw  
dayly devours apace, and nothing sed      little  
but that tow-handed engine at the dore  
stands readie to smite once and smite no more.

Returne Alpheus the dred voice is past  
that shrunk thy streams, returne Sicilian Muse  
and call the vales and bid them hither cast  
thire bells, and flowrets of a thousand hues

ye vallies low where the mild wispers use

of shades, and wanton winds, and <sup>u</sup>g<sup>o</sup>shing brooks  
on whose fresh lap the swart starre <sup>spar</sup><sub>le</sub> looks <sup>faintly</sup>  
<sup>bring</sup> hither all y<sup>r</sup> quaint enamelled eyes <sup>throw</sup>  
that on the greene terfe suck the honied shoutrs  
and purple all the ground w<sup>th</sup> vernal flowrs

Bring the rathe &c.

[The &c. refers to the third fragment on p. 14.]

to strew the laureat herse where Lycid lies

for so to interpose a little ease

let our ~~sad~~ thoughts dally w<sup>th</sup> false surmise

frail

Aymee whilst thee <sup>ye</sup> <sup>A</sup> floods and sounding seas shoares  
wash farre away, where ere thy bones are hurl'd  
whether beyond the stormie Hebrides  
where thou phapps under the humming tide  
visit'st the bottome of the monstrous world  
or whether thou to our moist vows deni'd  
sleep'st by the fable of Corinneus old <sup>Bellerus</sup>  
where the great vision of the guarded mount  
looks toward Namanco's and Bayona's hold  
looke homeward Angel now and melt with ruth  
and O ye Dolphins waft the haplesse youth

[Here half a sheet is left blank.]

Weepe no more wofull shepheards weepe no more

for Lycidas yo<sup>r</sup> sorrow is not dead

sunck though he be beneath the watrie floare

so sinks the day starre in the Ocean bed

& yet anon repairs his drooping head

## “LYCIDAS”

and tricks his beames & w<sup>th</sup> newspangled ore  
 flams in y<sup>e</sup> forhead of y<sup>e</sup> morning skie  
 so Lycidas sunk low but mounted **high**      <sup>high</sup>  
 through the deare might of him that walkt  
 y<sup>e</sup> waves

where other groves and other streames along  
 w<sup>th</sup> nectar **pure** pure his oozie locks he laves  
 & heares **listening** the unexpressive nuptial song  
 in the blest kingdoms meek of joy & love  
 there entertaine him all the S<sup>ts</sup> above  
 in sollemne troops and sweet societies  
 that sing, and singing in thire glorie move  
 and wipe the teares for ever from his eyes  
 now Lycidas the shepheards weepe no more  
 henceforth thou art the Genius of y<sup>e</sup> shoare  
 in thy large recompence, and shalt be good  
 to all that wander in that perillous flood

Thus sung the uncouth swaine to the oakes &  
 rills

while y<sup>e</sup> still morne went out w<sup>th</sup> sandals gray  
 he touch't the tender stops of various quills  
 w<sup>th</sup> eager thought warbling his Dorick lay  
 and now the Sun had strecht out all the hills  
 and now was dropt into **westren** the wester'n bay  
 at last he rose and twitcht his mantle blew  
 To morrow to fresh woods and pasturs new.

[Milton's manuscript breaks up the poem into eleven paragraphs or Strophes. These are followed in the succeeding chapter.]

### III.—ANALYSIS AND ILLUS- TRATION

STROPHE I. [I write, reluctant but compelled,  
for Lycidas is dead.]

*Yet once more, O ye laurels, and once more,  
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,  
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,  
And with forced fingers rude  
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.* 5  
*Bitter constraint and sad occasion dear  
Compels me to disturb your season due ;  
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,  
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.  
Who would not sing for Lycidas ? he well  
knew* 10  
 *Himself to sing, and build the lofty rime.  
He must not float upon his watery bier  
Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,  
Without the meed of some melodious tear.*

The opening words, **yet once more**, remind us that Milton is a Subjective poet. The Objective

poet altogether hides himself behind his works ; we enjoy his creations, but their creator is out of sight. Concerning Homer, Virgil, Shakespeare (except for the enigmatic sonnets), we only know that they lived and that they died, and that they were a little lower than the angels ; their personality is never revealed, they are Objective poets. Certain other poets in their writings take us into their confidence and speak to us of themselves ; they are Subjective poets. Such, in our own literature, are Pope, Cowper, Wordsworth, Byron, Arnold : such too is Milton. His confidences are not extravagant ; but in his sonnets he tells us of his friends, his birthday, his blindness, his dead wife ; descends from the celestial heights of *Paradise Lost* to the pathetic apostrophe in Book III. So here in Lycidas he invokes the Muse's favour to his **destined urn**, paints with pastoral imagery his Cambridge life, defends his persistent loyalty to the **homely slighted shepherd's trade**, twice punctuates lamentation for his friend with an **Ay me** for himself, poses in rural garb with Dorian lyre in hand as the **uncouth swain** of his epilogue, ending as he began with the reminder that he is no neophyte in the Muses' train. During his seven years of retirement and study at Horton he had written *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* about 1632, the *Arcades* probably a year later ; and *Comus*, performed as a masque in 1634, had just now been printed by Henry Lawes. “Yet once more,” then, he will pluck leaves and berries from Apollo's sacred trees ; **laurels and myrtles brown**—*et vos, o lauri, carpam, et te, proxima myrte* (Virgil, *Ecl.* ii. 54), and from “ivy,” “which rewards the poet's brows” (Horace, *Od.* I. i. 29). The university degree of bachelor is *baccalaureus* : its recipients in mediaeval times were crowned with berried laurel. Milton's mind and taste were steeped in classic literature and feeling : apart from obvious adaptations, a flavour of

## ANALYSIS AND ILLUSTRATION 25

Theocritus and Virgil runs through this poem ; and, though Horace was in no sense pastoral, his felicitous epithets and phrases are frequently annexed. In this opening line and a half, **myrtles brown** is Horace's *pulla myrto* (*Od.* I. xxv. 17), while **ivy never sere**, i.e., evergreen, is from *hedera virente*, in the same Ode. "Sere" is from Anglo-Saxon *searian* = to dry ; it is found also in Spenser's *Shepheards Calendar*, i. 37, "my leaf is dry and sere" ; and in *Macbeth*, V. iii. 23, "the sere, the yellow leaf." We observe that line 1 has no answering rime ; and the same is true of lines 13, 22, 39, 82, 91, 92, 161.

He will sing, then, but with reluctance ; his song is premature ; the berries will be **harsh and crude**, sour and unripe, as in *Comus*, 479, "feast of nectareous sweets where no crude surfeit reigns." He must **shatter the leaves**, which are still green and tender, not hardened by the **mellowing year**. "Shatter"—the first draft had "crop"—is the same word with "scatter" ; as shirt = skirt, shell = scale. We have it again in *Paradise Lost*, x. 1069, "shattering the graceful locks of these fair spreading trees." "Mellowing year" (A.-S. *meara* = soft, Lat. *mollis*) is a reflection from Theocritus, vii. 85, ἔτος ὄψιον. Yet, though reluctant, write he must : **bitter constraint and sad occasion dear compels**. His use here of the singular verb he found warranted by Spenser, *F.Q.* I. i. 53, "love of yourselfe, he said, and deare constraint lets me not sleape" ; the two subjects forming in his mind a single motive. "Dear" is used in a now obsolete sense for forcible, or cogent : as in *Comus*, 794, "enjoy your dear wit and gay rhetoric" ; and as in Prince Hal's reception of his father's expostulation (*I. Henry IV.* IV. v. 14), "I had forestalled this dear and deep rebuke."

**For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime**, etc., is a reminder of Spenser's *Sh. Cal.* xi. 37, "For deade is Dido, dead alas and drent, Dido, the fairest

May she was that ever went.” An emphasis must be laid on *his*. **And hath not left his peer** is the *quando ullum inveniet parem* of Horace, *Od.* I. xxiv. 8. **Who would not sing for Lycidas** is the *neget quis carmina Gallo?* of Virgil, *Ecl.* x. 3. **He well knew himself to sing**, says Milton: we only hear of King as writing Latin verses, but his English compositions may have been known to his friends. In the fragment (p. 14), and again in the fair draft (p. 16), Milton wrote “he well knew.” The printer omitted “well”; but in Milton’s copy of the printed book, preserved in the Cambridge University Library, he has reinserted it in his own handwriting. He composed by ear, shortening “Lycidas” here, as he shortened Arethuse in line 85; as Keats shortened “Pacific” in the sonnet to Chapman’s Homer:

“He stared on the Pacific, and all his men.”

The phrase “knew to sing” is paralleled in *Comus*: “well knew to still the wild waves when they roar.” **Build the lofty rime** may have been suggested by Euripi. *Supplices*, 996, ἀσιδᾶς ἐσπύργωσεν, “reared the song,” or from Horace, *Epist.* I. iii. 24, “condis amabile carmen.” Milton rightly wrote *rime*, from A.-S. *rim*=number. “Rhyme” is a mis-spelling, not found earlier than 1550, from confusion with “rhythm.” **Bler**, written *beare* by Milton, is from A.-S. *beran*=to bear, Lat. *fer*, Gr. *φερειν*. **Welter** is the English form of German *wealtan*=to roll, whence “wallow” and “waltz.” **Meed of some melodious tear** is like the *debita lacryma* which Septimius was to shed on Horace’s tomb (*Od.* II. vi. 23). “Meed” is A.-S. *mēd*=hire, pay, cognate with Gr. *μισθός*.

## STROPHE II. [Help me Muses.]

Begin, then, sisters of the sacred well                    15  
 That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring ;  
 Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string.  
 Hence with denial vain and coy excuse :  
 So may some gentle Muse  
 With lucky words favour my destined urn,            20  
 And, as he passes, turn,  
 And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud

**Begin then** is the usual pastoral opening; the *ἀρχετέ* *Mνισκαί* of Theocritus, the *Incipe Musa* of Virgil. By **the sacred well** may be meant the Pierian spring below Olympus, or Aganippe, the "Helicon's harmonious spring" of Gray's Ode, **Coy** is from Latin *quietus*=shy, withdrawing, unobtrusive. **Lucky words** is the Latin *bona verba*. Ill-omened words, intentional or accidental, were held fatal to the effectiveness of a sacred rite. *Male ominatis parcite verbis*, "a truce to ill-omened words," cp. Horace (*Od.* III. xiv. 2), and the liturgical *Favete linguis*, "speak lucky words or none" (*Od.* III. i. 2), was a charge pronounced by the priest in opening the Mysteries. In **my destined urn** the "my" is emphatic. **Sable shroud** is a black funeral pall. *Sobole* is the name given in Russia to the little animal (*Mustela zibellina*) which yields the precious fur: and, the black skins being the most valuable, the adjective was used to mean black. "Shroud" (A.-S. *screade*) is a garment; here used for a mortcloth: it was originally "a torn off fragment," so akin to "shred."

## STROPHE III. [Our happy College life.]

*For we were nursed upon the self-same hill,  
Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill ;  
Together both, ere the high lawns appeared      25  
Under the opening eyelids of the Morn,  
We drove a-field, and both together heard  
What time the grey-fly winds her sultry horn,  
Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night,  
Oft till the star that rose at evening bright      30  
Towards heaven's descent had sloped his  
westering wheel.  
Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute ;  
Tempered to the oaten flute  
Rough Satyrs danced, and Fauns with cloven  
heel  
From the glad sound would not be absent long ;      35  
And old Damætas loved to hear our song.*

It is told, in pastoral language, not perhaps without a certain loss of force. The college companionship of the two students, prolonged often till late into the night, is described as nocturnal sheepfolding; their mutual study and converse are rural ditties on the oaten flute; their associates are the

Satyrs and Fauns by Dian set  
To keep rough hills and forest holts  
(*Polyolbion*, l. 24);

the tutor, or director of their reading, is an old shepherd Damætas. The **high lawns** on which the pair fed their flocks stood for any kind of grassy

field, as in *L'Allegro*, 71, "russet lawns and fallows grey." The word is M.E. *laund*, O.Fr. *lande*=a space of grassy ground, identical with our *land*. **The opening eyelids of the morn** stood first as "glimmering" eyelids. The phrase is from Job III. 9, retained in our version as a marginal reading for the less picturesque "dawning of the day"; it occurs again in the text of xli. 18. The image had been used in *Comus*, l. 978, "where **day** never shuts his eye"; in *Il Penseroso*, l. 14, "Hide me from day's garish eye," and in the Sonnet to the Nightingale, whose liquid notes "close the eye of day." Jeremy Taylor, in the *Holy Dying* (p. 17, Pickering), writes "The Sun . . . opens a little eye of day." In **we drove a-field** the prefix *a*=on, as in "amain," l. 111. **What time**, in the line following, is a Latinism, *quo tempore*. So *Comus*, 291, "what time the laboured ox in his loose traces from the furrow came." **The grey-fly** is the gnat. **Battening our flocks** has the same meaning, though not the same derivation, as "fattening." Its root is *bat*, =good, prosperous, the positive form of better and best. **The star that rose at evening bright** is Hesperus; the "star that bids the shepherd fold" of *Comus*, 93. In **sloped his westering wheel**, "sloped" is from A.-S. *slipan*=to slip; but Milton uses it here as a transitive verb; in *Comus*, 98, turns it into an adjective, "and the slope sun his upward beam shoots against the dusky pole." "His," is the old and correct possessive case of the third personal pronoun *hit*. "Its" was a late corruption, not older than the end of the 16th century. The word occurs only once in our Bible version, Leviticus xxv. 5, "that which groweth of its own accord," this being an alteration of the printers from the original "his." It is rarely found in Shakespeare, is used three times by Milton, *P.L.* I. 254; IV. 813; *Hymn on the Nativity*, l. 106; when Dryden wrote

it had established itself. (See l. 97). In the **rural ditties . . . tempered to the oaten flute** we have a reflex of Horace's *dulcem quæ strepitum Pieri temperas* (*Od.* IV. iii. 101), “who temperest the dulcet sounds of the golden shell.” “Ditties,” Latin *dicta*, = utterances, is usually, as here, confined to songs. The “oaten flute,” or rather flageolet, is the pastoral pipe or *tibia*. It was made of hollow cane, reed, bone; most simply from straw of oat. Sometimes it was a single pipe, sometimes double, *biforem dat tibia cantum* (*Æn.* IX. 618), sometimes sevenfold, when it was known as *fistula*. *Est mihi disparibus septem compacta cicutis fistula* (Virgil, *Ecl.* II. 35), the *συρίξ* or pan-pipe of the Greeks (*Theocritus* I. 3, etc.) In Virgil it is often called *Avena* (*Ecl.* I. 2), and becomes *Oat* in English poetry. Spenser (*F.Q.* I. 3) has “for trumpet sterne to change my oaten reedes.” Again in Lycidas 88; and in Collins' exquisite *Ode to Evening*, “If aught of oaten reed or pastoral stop.” The Satyrs and Fauns represent, as has been said, the fellow-collegians who came to hear and share the two young men's talk—

“A band  
Of youthful friends, on Mind and Art  
And Labour, and the changing mart,  
And all the framework of the land.

So in *Ecl.* VI. 27, when Silenus begins to sing, the Fauns throng to listen; *Tum vero in numerum Faunosque ferasque videres ludere*. The Satyrs were the rural deities of Greece, identical with the Latin Fauns. By **Old Damoëtas** may be meant Chappell, Milton's tutor at Christ's; or, as Milton is said heartily to have disliked him, more probably Bambridge, Master of the College, whom he respected. Damoëtas is a shepherd in *Theocritus*, *Idyll VI.*, in Virgil, *Ecl.* III. In *Ecl.* II. 37 he is described as an old shepherd, who, when dying, bequeaths his *fistula* to Corydon.

## STROPHE IV. [Tears for his loss.]

But, oh ! the heavy change, now thou art gone,  
 Now thou art gone and never must return !  
 Thee, shepherd, thee the woods and desert caves,  
 With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'er-  
     grown,    40  
 And all their echoes mourn.  
 The willows, and the hazel copses green,  
 Shall now no more be seen  
 Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.  
 As killing as the canker to the rose,                  45  
 Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze,  
 Or frost to flowers, that their gay wardrobe wear,  
 When first the white-thorn blows ;  
 Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear.

**Thee, shepherd, thee,** is a familiar rhetorical repetition. So Horace, *Od. II. iv. 21*, *Vester, Camænæ, vester*; and Virgil, *Georg. IV. 466*, *Te veniente die, te decedente canebat*. For **the woods and desert caves, and all their echoes** we turn to Bion, *Adonidis Epitaphium* :—

Ὥρεα πάντα λέγοντι καὶ ἀι δρῦς “ ἀι τὸν Ἀδωνιν,”  
 καὶ ποταμοὶ κλαίοντι τὰ πένθεα τᾶς Αφροδίτας,  
 καὶ παγαὶ τὸν Ἀδωνιν ἐν ὥρεσι δακρύοντι,  
 ἀχὼ δ' ἀντεβόασεν “ ἀπώλετο καλὸς Ἀδωνις.”<sup>1</sup>

The phrase itself is probably Horace's *nemora aut specus*, *Od. III. xxv. 2*. **The gadding wild vine**

<sup>1</sup> Adonis fair the woods and hills lament,  
 Venus' lost love the springs and rivers mourn ;  
 Echo returns the cry—"Adonis fair is dead."

is the *vitis labrusca* of Linnæus. Virgil cites it (*Ecl.* v. 5), “*Aspice ut antrum sylvestris vario sparsit labrusca racemo*, “See how the woodland vine over the cave its clusters rare hath strown.” It lifts itself to-day on the ledges of ascending rocks, or climbs among the brambles at the mouth of caves. “*Gadding*” is from A.-S. *gad*, = goad, running like cattle stung by a gad-fly. Milton probably had in mind the *errantes hederas*, the “*gadding ivy*” of *Ecl.* iv. 19. **Canker** is from Gr. *καρκινός*—an eating tumour with a hard exterior like that of a crab (*cancer*). It is used sometimes as an adjective—“and then shall canker sorrow eat my bud” (*K. John III.* iii). What Milton meant by **taintworm** is uncertain. “*Taint*,” Fr. *teindre*, Lat. *tingere*, is = to *stain*, and so to corrupt, vitiate; any fly or grub which harms **the weanling herds that graze**. Weanling, or newly weaned, is A.-S. *weanian*, to accustom (the infinitive of *wont*), i.e., inure to privation from accustomed sustenance. **Their gay wardrobe** is the old French *garde-robe*, a safeguarding receptacle for garments, transferred to the garments themselves. “*Robe*” is from A.-S. *reafian*, to despoil, Latin, *rapere*, whence *reave*, *bereave*, *reft*, *rob*; our ancestors’ conceiving of a handsome garment only as stripped from an enemy. Walter Scott used laughingly to quote the couplet from a forgotten poem :—

A painted vest Prince Vortigern had on,  
Which from a naked Pict his grandsire won.

“To shepherds’ ear” suggests to us, if it did not so to Milton, the “more tuneable than lark to shepherds’ ear” of *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, I. i.

STROPHE V. [Where were the guardian  
Nymphs of the Cheshire coast ?]

*Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless  
deep* 50

*Closed o'er the head of your loved Lycidas ?  
For neither were ye playing on the steep,  
Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie,  
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,  
Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard  
stream :* 55

*Ay me ! I fondly dream  
“Had ye been there,” . . . . for what could that  
have done ?*

*What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore,  
The Muse herself, for her enchanting son,  
Whom universal nature did lament,* 60  
*When, by the rout that made the hideous roar,  
His gory visage down the stream was sent,  
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore ?*

The opening lines are an imitation of *Theocritus*, I. 66 :—

πῆ ποκ' ἄρ' ἥσθ', ὅκα Δάφνις ἐτάκετο, πῆ ποκα, Νύμφαι,  
ἢ κατὰ Πηνεῶ καλὰ τέμπεα ; ἢ κατὰ Πίνδω ;  
οὐ γάρ δὴ ποταμοῖο μέγαν ρόον ἔιχετ' Ἀνάπω,  
οὐδὲ Αἴτνας σκοπιὰν, οὐδὲ Ἄκιδος ἱερὸν ὕδωρ.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Where were ye, Nymphs, oh where, while Daphnis pined ?  
In fair Peneas, or in Pindus' glens ?  
For great Anapus' stream was not your haunt,  
Nor Etna's cliff, nor Acis' sacred rill.

—CALVERLEY.

The lines are rendered again by Virgil, *Ecl. x.* 9 :—

Quæ nemora aut qui vos saltus habuere, Puellæ  
 Naiades, indigno cum Gallus amore periret?  
 Nam neque Parnassi vobis juga, nam neque Pindi  
 Ulla moram fecere, neque Aonia Aganippe.<sup>1</sup>

So Spenser (*Astrophel*, l. 50) :—

Ah! where were ye the while, his Shepherd Peares,  
 To whom alive was nought so deare as hee?  
 And ye, fayre Mayds, the matches of his yeares?

And we may cite Shelley, *Adonais*, II. :—

Where wert thou, Mighty Mother, when he lay,  
 When thy Son lay, pierced by the shaft which flies  
 In darkness?

The adjacent points of land are here enumerated which look upon the fatal sea. **Mona** is Anglesey, **The Steep** probably Snowdon; “Mona on Snowdon calls,” says Ossian; **Deva** is the river Dee; **Druids** is from *Druidh*, Gaelic for a magician. It has no connection with the similarly sounding Greek or Gaelic words for an oak. The high interior of Anglesey is **shaggy**, roughly wooded; a reminder possibly of Horace’s *opaco Olympo* (*Od. III. iv. 51*), or of *horridi dumeta Silvani* (*III. xxix. 23*). So in Gray’s *Bard*, l. 10, “the steep of Snowdon’s shaggy side.” Shaggy is A.-S. *sceacga* = hair; hairy and so rough. Shag tobacco is a rough tobacco; shagreen, a rough leather. Deva’s is a **wizard stream**, from a local superstition that changes in its fords forbode good or evil. “*Wizard*” = wise man (O.Fr. *guiscard*), is from A.-S. *witan*, to know, Gr. *σιδ*, Lat. *vid*; preserved in *to wit*, *wist*, *wot*, etc., and in the Saxon *Witangemot*, wise mens’ meeting.

**Ay me! I sadly dream** (Gr. *σιφοι*) marks by

<sup>1</sup> What groves, what glens concealed ye, watry Nymphs,  
 When Gallus died of ill-requited love?  
 For not Parnassus’ top, nor Pindus’ steeps,  
 Nor Aganippe’s stream lent aid to him.

## ANALYSIS AND ILLUSTRATION 35

a rhetorical artifice, repeated in l. 152, the abandonment of a false surmise; of a thought which the poet could not refrain from indulging, yet felt to be inconsequent—where were the nymphs? *but* they could not have helped; strew the laureate hearse; *but* there is no hearse to strew. We may record the same arrest of thought in *The Scholar Gypsy*—“But what? I dream! two hundred years are flown, since first the story ran through Oxford halls,” and the “Ah, vain!” of a like ejaculation in *Thyrsis*. **What could the Muse herself**, etc., observe on p. 15 the erasures and attempts of Milton before he could get these lines to his mind. The Muse is Calliope. The two mythical poets of antiquity, Linus and Orpheus, were both sons of Apollo; the mother of Linus was Terpsichore, of Orpheus Calliope—Virgil, *Ecl.* iv. 57. The sympathy of **universal Nature** with a departed poet is a pastoral commonplace. Says *Theocritus*, I. 71:—

*τῆνον μὰν Θῶες, τῆνον λύκοι ὠρύσαντο,  
τῆνον κώκ δρυμοῖο Δέων ἔκλαυτε θάνοντα  
πολλὰὶ ὅτι πάρ ποστὶ βόες, πολλὸι δέ τε ταῦροι,  
πολλὰὶ δὲ δάμαλαι καὶ πόρτιες ὠδύραντο.*<sup>1</sup>

So Virgil's Lycoris on the death of Gallus, *Ecl.* x. 13:—

Illum etiam lauri, illum etiam flevere myricæ,  
Pinifer illum etiam sola sub rupe jacentem  
Mænalus, et gelidi fleverunt saxa Lycae,  
Stant et oves circum, nostri nec pænitet illas.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> O'er him the wolves, the jackals howled o'er him,  
The lion in the oak copse mourned his death,  
The kine and oxen stood around his feet,  
The heifers and the calves wailed all for him.

—CALVERLEY.

<sup>2</sup> Him wept the laurels, him the myrtles wept,  
Him Mænalus with all his pines bewailed,  
And cool Lycaeus sorrowed o'er his corpse;  
My sheep stood round, and joined their grief to mine.

## “LYCIDAS”

**And the thought is caught up by Scott (Lay v. 1):—**

Call it not vain ! they do not err,  
Who say, that when the poet dies,  
Mute Nature mourns her worshipper,  
And celebrates his obsequies, etc.

**In the rout that made the hideous roar,**  
rout is Lat. *ruptus*, a confused broken crowd. So Comus enters “with a rout of monsters”: so *P.L.* vii. 34, “That wild rout that tore the Thracian bard.” Orpheus was torn in pieces by the Thracian Mænads, offended at the widower’s obtrusive devotion to his dead Eurydice (Virgil, *Georg.* IV. 520).

Spretæ Ciconum quo munere matres  
Inter sacra deum, nocturnique orgia Bacchi  
Discerptum lætos juvenem sparsere per agros.<sup>1</sup>

The similar story is told luridly by Theocritus (*Id. xxvi.*) of King Pentheus, torn in pieces by the Theban Bacchanals. They too “roar” like a lioness when they clutch their prey. So in Psalm lxxiv. 4, “Thine enemies roar in thy congregation.” To be sent down the stream was the fate of Daphnis (*Theocr. I.* 140):—

Δάφνις ἔβα, βοον ἐκλυτε δῖνα  
Τὸν Μουσᾶν φίλον ἄνδρα, τὸν οὐ Νυμφαισιν ἀπεχθῆ<sup>2</sup>

**Swift Hebrus** is a Virgilian expression, *volucremque fuga prævertitur Hebrum*, “prevents swift Hebrus in her flight.” Hebrus would bear the head across the sea to Lesbos, which lies opposite to its mouth.

<sup>1</sup> Mid Bacchic orgies the mad Thracian dames  
Dispersed his mangled body o’er the fields.

<sup>2</sup> So down the stream  
Went Daphnis; closed the waters o’er his head,  
Dear to the Nine, of Nymphs not unbeloved.

STROPHE VI. [Alas! Death forestalls and cancels Fame. But not so! Fame is voiced by heaven, not by earth.]

*Alas! what boots it with incessant care  
To tend the homely, slighted, shepherd's trade,* 65  
*And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?*  
*Were it not better done, as others use,  
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,  
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair?*  
*Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise* 70  
*(That last infirmity of noble mind)*  
*To scorn delights and live laborious days;*  
*But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,*  
*And think to burst out into sudden blaze,*  
*Comes the blind Fury with the abhorred shears,* 75  
*And slits the thin-spun life. "But not the praise,"*  
*Phœbus replied, and touched my trembling ears:*  
*"Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,  
Nor in the glistening foil*  
*Set off to the world, nor in broad rumour lies,* 80  
*But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes*  
*And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;*  
*As he pronounces lastly on each deed,*  
*Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed."*

**A**las! what boots it? "Boot" is from A.-S. *botan*=to profit, whence *booty*, *bootless*. **Meditate the thankless Muse** is Virgilian; *Musam meditaris* (*Ecl. i. 2*). So *Comus*, 547, "To meditate my rural minstrelsy." **As others use** is a supposed hit at

Buchanan's lighter poems. “Use” = practise, are wont, is from the low Latin *usare*, frequentative of *uti*. **Amaryllis** is repeatedly named or invoked in Virgil as a beautiful shepherdess. **In the shade** suggests the *grato sub antro* of Horace's *Ode to Myrrha*, I. v. 3. **Neæra's hair** is extolled by Horace (*Od.* III. xiv. 21), *Die et argutæ properet Neæra myrrheum nodo cohibere crinem*, “bid silver-voiced Neæra too to hasten and knot her myrr-scented hair.” **Fame is the spur**, etc., is a reminder of Spenser's *Tears of the Muses*, 454; “due praise, that is the spur of doing well.” **The clear spirit** is a spirit which has run clear of all sordid and selfish lowness; the “free spirit” of Psalm li. 12; in *Paradise Lost*, i. 679, Mammon is called “the least erected spirit.” The oft-quoted parenthetic line which follows is nearly always quoted wrong, *minds* for *mind*. In Massinger's *A very Woman* (V. iv. 13) we find “Though the desire of Fame be the last weakness wise men put off”; and Sir Henry Wotton says of King James I., “I will not deny his appetite for glory, which generous minds do ever latest part.” **To scorn delights** is the *omissis deliciis* of Horace, *Ep.* I. vi. 30. **The fair guerdon** (= recompense) is derived from the low Latin *wider donum*, a curious hybrid, composed by Old High German *wider* = back again, and Lat. *donum*, a gift, that is, a gift recovered or returned.

**The blind Fury**, blind because undiscriminating, is *Atropos*, who slit **the thinspun life** which her sisters, Lachesis and Clotho, had allotted and twined. Atropos, as Milton must have known, was not a Fury but a Fate; they are often confused or joined by the poets, though in strictness the function of the Furies was to punish crime, of the Fates to fulfil Destiny. Horace, in the Archytas ode, ascribes to the Furies human deaths on the battlefield; and in his preface to Clough's poems, Palgrave speaks of the “blind

Fury Fate." The intervention, **Phœbus replied, and touched my trembling ears**, is adapted from Virgil, *Ecl.* vi. 3, *Cynthius aurem vellit et admonuit*, "Apollo twitched my ear and warned." **The glistening foil set off to the world** is the shining metallic leaf used by jewellers to set off transparent stones. "Glistening" is twice used in *Comus*: the transformed monsters enter "with apparel glistening," and in 219 we have "would send a glistening guardian." And in Luke ix. 29, our version reads "His raiment was white and glistening." **Of so much Fame in heaven expect thy meed,** is expanded in the *Areopagitica* (p. 45, Osborne's Ed.) into "that lasting fame and perpetuity of praise which God and good men have, shall be the reward of those, whose published labours advance the good of mankind."

STROPHE VII. [The sea-gods exculpate themselves.]

*O fountain Arethuse, and thou honoured flood* 85  
*Smooth-sliding Mincius, crowned with vocal reeds,*  
*That strain I heard was of a higher mood.*  
*But now my oat proceeds.*  
*And listens to the Herald of the Sea*  
*That came in Neptune's plea.* 90  
*He asked the waves, and asked the felon winds,*  
*What hard mishap hath doomed this gentle*  
*swain?*  
*And questioned every gust of rugged wings*  
*That blows from off each beaked promontory.*  
*They knew not of his story;* 95  
*And sage Hippotades their answer brings,*

*That not a blast was from his dungeon strayed ;  
 The air was calm, and on the level brine  
 Sleek Panope with all her sisters played.  
 It was that fatal and perfidious bark,*      100  
*Built in the eclipse, and rigged with curses dark,  
 That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.*

**Fountain Arethuse** is the sacred well of Sicilian poetry, and is still visible in a street of Syracuse. Some years ago the sea broke into it, and was walled out; it resembles to-day an artificial garden pond, seven or eight feet square, filled with waterlilies. The story of the nymph is beautifully told by Shelley. We observe that, as the line now stands, Arethuse must be pronounced as a dissyllable. Milton first wrote “Oh fountain Arethuse, and thou smooth flood,” demanding a trisyllable; then altered “smooth” into “famed,” finally into “honoured.” In *Theocritus*, I. 117, the dying Daphnis bids farewell to Arethusa :—

χαῖρ' Αρεθοῦσα,  
 καὶ ποταμοὶ, τοὶ χεῖτε καλὸν κατὰ Θυμβρίδος ὕδωρ.<sup>1</sup>

To her Virgil dedicates his closing eclogue—*extremum hunc, Arethusa, mihi concede laborem*, “aid, Arethusa, this my final toil.” **Mincius crowned with vocal reeds**, flowed near Mantua, Virgil’s birthplace. He three times mentions its reeds: *Ecl. vii. 12*; *G. iii. 15*; *Æn. x. 205*. “Vocal” is Milton’s own tributary epithet. The reeds are invoked as guiding his recurrence to the theme from the higher mood into which his digression on Fame had led him. “Mood” (Lat. *modus*) was a term noting the various scales of Greek music, Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, adopted thus into early

<sup>1</sup> Arethuse, farewell,  
 And ye bright streams that pour down Thymbris’ side.

Christian music with its tones or modes. It came to signify any kind of minstrelsy: Horace's Chloe (III. ix. 10) is skilled in sweet songs, *dulces docta modos*, and he bids Phyllis (*Od.* IV. xi. 34) "learn of him songs (*modos*) which her sweet voice may render back."

The advent of the gods has its parallel in *Theocritus*, I. 76, where Hermes, Priapus, Aphrodite, come with herdsmen and goatherds to lament and console the dying Daphnis. The **herald of the sea** is Triton, son to Neptune and Amphitrite, represented as riding the waves and blowing his wreathed horn. He **came in Neptune's plea**: to enquire on his Sire's behalf into the charge that the remorseless deep had slain young Lycidas. "Plea" is low Latin *placitum*. He questioned **the waves, the felon winds** (low Latin *felo*=a traitor), the sudden gusts which blow like descending wings from off the land, asking which of them had **doomed the gentle swain** (A.-S. *dóm*, a judgment, akin to Gr. *θέμις*). The answer that the sea had been calm is brought by **sage Hippotades**, Æolus, son to Hippotes and Melanippe, a prince whose skill in navigation and meteorology caused him to be mytho-poetised as gaoler of the winds (*Odyssey*, X. 2; and *Aen.* I. 56, etc.). He reports **that not a blast had from his dungeon strayed**; "his" referring to Æolus, or, as in line 31 = *its*. "Dungeon," sometimes written *donjon*, may be *domus juncta*, an appended building; more probably from low Latin *dominionium* = *lordship*: it is the chief tower or keep in a castle. **Panope** was one of the fifty Nereids, daughters of Nereus and Doris, *omnis Nereidum Phorcique domus*, *Panopeaque virgo* (*Aen.* V. 240). The wrecked ship had been **built in the eclipse**: a phenomenon portentous of evil in classic times; we remember how in the crisis of Athenian fate at Syracuse, an eclipse, inducing superstitious Nicias to postpone departure, caused the annihilation of his fleet and army. In

*P.L.* I. 597, Milton speaks of “dim eclipse . . . perplexing nations”; and the witches in *Macbeth* (IV. i. 316) collect slips of yew “slivered in the moon’s eclipse.” St James I. 17, says that God, Father of all the lights, suffers no eclipse” (E.V. variableness).

STROPHE VIII. [Camus bewails the Cambridge scholar; St Peter the intended shepherd of souls.]

*Next, Camus, reverend sire, went footing slow,  
His mantle hairy and his bonnet sedge  
Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge 105  
Like to that sanguine flower inscribed with woe.  
“Ah! who hath reft,” quoth he, “my dearest  
pledge?”*

*Last came, and last did go,  
The pilot of the Galilean lake;  
Two massy keys he bore of metals twain 110  
(The golden opes, the iron shuts amain).  
He shook his mitred locks, and stern bespake:—  
“How well could I have spared for thee, young  
swain,*

*Enow of such as, for their bellies’ sake,  
Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold! 115  
Of other care they little reckoning make  
Than how to scramble at the shearers’ feast,  
And shove away the worthy bidden guest.*

*Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how  
to hold  
A sheep-hook, or have learned aught else the  
least 120*

*That to the faithful herdman's art belongs !  
What recks it them ? What need they ? They  
are sped ;  
And, when they list, their lean and flashy songs  
Grate on their scrawnly pipes of wretched straw ;  
The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed, 125  
But swoln with wind and the rank mist they  
draw,  
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread ;  
Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw  
Daily devours apace, and nothing said.  
But that two-handed engine at the door 130  
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more."*

**Next, Camus, reverend Sire, went footing slow.** Camus is the genius or personification of the Cam, and so of Cambridge. The river is first known as "Granta"; the town adjoining a bridge which spanned the river was "Grantanbrygge," then by a curious transformation "Cantebrigge"—so Chaucer calls it in the Reeve's Tale—then "Cambrigge," "Cambridge." That Granta and Cam should be the same words is an etymological paradox. The tutelar of the sluggish river comes "footing slow," and we recall Ariel's "foot it feately here and there" in the *Tempest*, I. ii. Our interpretation of the costume assigned to Camus must, in consequence of Milton's habitually loose botany, be in some measure guesswork. The **mantle hairy** is the rough conferva clothing, the surface of a slow stream at that time undisturbed by oars, as in the "green mantle of the standing pool" of mad Edgar, and Ariel's "filthy mantled pool beyond your cell." **Bonnet sedge** must refer to the rushes,

## “LYCIDAS”

flags, reeds, which line the river bank: *arundineum Camum*, “reedy Cam,” Milton calls it in his first elegy on Diodati, line 11. “Sedge” (A.-S. *sæcg*, = a cutter or dagger, used here as an adjective) was applied of old to any sharp-leaved marsh or water plant. Chapman (Homer, *Il.* II.) makes horses feed on “greatest parsly and on sedge that in the fens is bred.” In Wyclif’s Bible (Exod. ii. 3), “she took a leep of segge,” stands for our E.V., “ark of bulrushes.” The name is confined by botanists to-day to the genus *Carex*. **Inwrought with figures dim**, stood first “scraul’d o’er with figures dim”; they are the marks or cracks, somewhat resembling written characters, to be seen on the large decaying leaves of water plants; supposed, it is said, to have prompted the use of the papyrus leaves as vehicles for letters. **That sanguine flower** fringing the bonnet’s edge would be the wild hyacinth or bluebell, *Scilla nutans*, growing on the bank above the river; “sanguine,” because the classical flower, whose identity we cannot trace, sprang from the blood of slain Hyacinthus; **inscribed with woe**, because the Greeks discerned on its petals the letters “*Aiai=woe*; and in his first draft of the plant-catalogue Milton wrote:—

And that sad flowre that strove  
To write his owne woes on the vermeil graine.

Others read the marking as “*Aiai=Ajax*; whence Virgil (*Ecl.* I. 106) cites its blossoms as *flores inscripti nomina regum*, “flowers inscribed with royal names, and Linnæus calls the Larkspur, which he thought to be the flower meant, *Delphinium Ajæcis*. **Reft** (l. 107) is the participle of *reafian*, see note on l. 46. Its past tense, *raft*, occurs in *F.Q.* I. i. 24, “he raft her horrid head without remorse.”

The twenty-four lines following (108-131) raise in us, says Mark Pattison, “a thrill of awestruck expecta-

tion which “I can only compare with that excited by the Cassandra of Æschylus’ *Agamemnon*; . . . . in these lines we have the preluding mutterings of the storm which was to sweep away masque and revel and songs, to inhibit the drama, and suppress poetry. . . . . In *Lycidas* Milton leaves behind him for ever the golden age and one half of his poetic genius.” The lines are put into the mouth of St Peter, **pilot of the Galilean lake**, who as Chief Shepherd of pastoral fantasy, and as historic guardian of Christ’s sheep, bewails the loss of one who must have become a faithful minister in his Church in an age of hireling priests. This same mixture of heathen, secular, biblical personages, which Johnson denounced as bordering on impiety, finds precedent in Spenser, who places Peter among the heathen deities, Dido among the saints; a licence employed with sometimes ludicrous effect by the pre-Shakespearean dramatists. The pilot bears **two massy keys**, his Master’s legacy (Matthew xxvi. 17). “Massy” is massive, Latin *massa*=a lump, so anything large and heavy. In *Il Penseroso*, l. 156, we have “antick pillars massy proof.” **The golden opes**, as in *Comus*, 13, “that golden key that opes the palace of Eternitie;”—**the iron shuts amain**; “main,” Lat. *magnus*, A.-S. *mægen*=strength; so “a-main”=with might. **Swain** is a word of Scandinavian origin, meaning *lad*. **Climb into the fold** is repeated in *P.L.* IV. 193, “so since into his church lewd hirelings climb”; as is **for their bellies’ sake** in the sonnet to Cromwell “the paw of hireling wolves whose gospel is their maw.” **To scramble at the shearers’ feast** is perhaps a reminder of Spenser’s *Astrophel*, l. 31: “Emongst the shepherds in their shearing feast.” **Shove** is from A.-S. *scofian*=to push about; whence shovel, sheaf, etc. **Blind mouths**, which has fed much conjecture, presents no difficulty to those acquainted with the

classical use of the word “blind” to express ineffective, useless. In *Œd.* Col. 183, *ἀμανρῷ χώλῳ* is a *blind limb*; in the same play, 1639, *ἀμανρῷς χέρσῃ* stands for *blind hands*; and in *Hecuba*, 1850, we have *τυφλῷ ποδὶ*, a *blind foot*. Mouths they are by profession; but mouths mute and dull, useless as blind eyes. Ruskin treats the phrase characteristically: “A bishop means a person who *sees*; a pastor means a person who *feeds*; the most unbishoply character a man can have is therefore to be *blind*; the most unpastoral is, instead of feeding, to want to be fed, to be a *mouth*” (*Sesame and Lilies*, p. 26).

**What recks it them?** what concerns it them? A.-S. *rekan*=to care; hence reckless: *Comus*, 404, “of night or loneliness it recks me not.” **They are sped**—“they” emphatic; *they* have succeeded, gained all they want. A.-S. *spedan*=to prosper; so “good speed, God speed you.” The attendants on Sisera’s mother (*Judges* v. 30) say to her, “have they not sped?” Observe Milton’s concentrated contempt for the perfunctory utterances of these lazy pastors expressed in the two harsh lines, 123-4. **When they list**, i.e., wish or please. A.-S. *lystan*=to desire, whence listless and lust. **Their lean and flashy songs grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw**:—an echo of Virgil, *Ecl.* III. 27, *stridenti stipula*, “grating straw”; or of *Theocritus*, v. 7, *καλάμας αὐλόν πιππύσδεν*, “tootling through straw,” “flashy,” showing for a moment, not lasting: “scrannel,” not found elsewhere, is probably coined by Milton to express “attenuated.” **The hungry sheep**, etc., may be indebted both to Spenser and to Dante. In the *Shepheards Calendar*, IX., a shepherd discoursing of what he has seen abroad of Popish prelates and their loose living, says—

Like as the shepheard sike beene the sheepe;  
For many have into mischiefe fall,  
And beene of ravenous wolves yrent;

and Cary renders Dante, *Par.* xxix. 112, "The sheep meanwhile, poor witted ones, return from pasture fed with wind." To Spenser, therefore, as probably to Milton, the "grim wolf" would be Rome. "A-pace" is like a-main in line 111. To quarrel with "and nothing said" as ungrammatical is a mere eccentricity of criticism: instances from Shakespeare might be multiplied. The ferocious closing couplet (lines 130-31) we must look upon as purposely enigmatical, the terror of the lines enhanced by their obscurity. They must, one feels, have given pause to the Censor who, not without some hesitation, passed the cryptic threat. But those who know Milton and his time can hardly doubt him to have meant the axe and block, still "at the door" of recent history, and ready to be brought forth again.

STROPHE IX. [Bring flowers to strew the  
grave—But no!]

*Return, Alpheus; the dread voice is past,  
That shrunk thy streams; return, Sicilian Muse,  
And call the vales, and bid them hither cast  
Their bells and flowerets of a thousand hues.* 135  
*Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use  
Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,  
On whose fresh lap the swart star sparingly looks,  
Throw hither all your quaint enamelled eyes,*  
*That on the green turf suck the honeyed showers,* 140  
*And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.  
Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,  
The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,  
The white pink, and the pansy freaked with jet,  
The glowing violet,* 145

*The musk-rose, and the well-attired woodbine,  
With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,  
And every flower that sad embroidery wears ;  
Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,  
And daffodillies fill their cups with tears,*      150  
*To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies.  
For so, to interpose a little ease,  
Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise.  
Ay me ! Whilst thee the shores and sounding seas  
Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurled ;*      155  
*Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,  
Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide  
Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world ;  
Or whether thou, to our moist vows denied,  
Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old,*      160  
*Where the great Vision of the guarded mount  
Looks toward Namancos and Bayona's hold.  
Look homeward, Angel, now, and melt with ruth :  
And, O ye dolphins, waft the hapless youth.*

**Return, Alpheus.** The Peloponnesian river-god, who, as related by Pausanias, pursued the flying nymph, Arethusa, under the sea, rising with her in the Ortygian fountain. Aeneas, in his wanderings (*Aen.* iii. 694), visits the spot, recounts the fable, and pays homage to the tutelary deities. And see *Arcades*, 30, “Divine Alpheus, who by secret sluice stole under sea to meet his Arethuse.” Milton here resumes the apostrophe opened in line 85, and broken off by the “dread sound” of denunciation on hireling pastors. For “Sicilian Muse,” see Virgil, *Sicelides Musæ, Ecl.* iv. 1. **The mild whispers use** is paralleled in *F.Q.* vi. 2: “in these strange

waines where never foot did use" (see on line 67). The **wanton winds** is a memory of Horace's *protervis ventis* (*Od.* I. xxvi. 2). The **swart star** is Sirius, called also *Canicula*, or the Dog-star. Rising at the hottest period of the year, it was credited with the heat which it accompanied. The followers of Æneas felt its power—*tum steriles exurere Sirius agros*, "Sirius began to scorch the withering fields" (*Aen.* iii. 141); the rock-sheltered Bandusian spring escaped its rays—*te flagrantis atrox hora Canicule nescit tangere*, "on thee the blazing dog-star's hour of fury lays no touch," *Od.* III. xiii. 9, and compare *Od.* I. xvii. 17. "Swart" is black, as in swarthy, A.-S. *sweart*; in *Comus*, 430, we have "swart fairies of the mine." The star whose influences blacken Nature's verdure is itself called black; as in Hor. *Sat.* I. ix. 72, the sun is black because it has risen on a dismal day. **Looks on** is the astrological term for starry influence; *seu Libra seu me Scorpios aspicit*—"whether it be the Balance or the Scorpion that looks on my hour of birth" (*Od.* II. xvii. 17).

**Throw hither all your quaint enamelled eyes**, calls to mind Herrick's

See how Aurora throws her faire  
Fresh-quilted colours through the aire.

"Quaint," in M.E. *queint* = famous, is probably from the Latin *cognitus*, well-known, notorious, rather than from *comptus*. It came to mean "odd, curious." In *Comus*, 157, we have "My quaint habits breed astonishment." "Enamelled" is from the French *en amaile*, the latter word in old French *esmaile*, said to be from O.H.G. *smalzjan* = to smelt. For the famous list of plants (lines 142-51) we may examine, on p. 15, Milton's first draft and later completion of the passage. From love of Nature or from literary instinct, the poetic mind has ever lingered over the

lore of flowers, utilising them for illustration or heaping them into decorative catalogues: through the poetry of all ages winds the silver thread of horticultural enthusiasm. The prehistoric, yet suggestive Genesis myth makes creation of a garden the first recorded act of Elohim in his new world: “gardens were before gardeners, and but some hours after the earth,” says Sir T. Browne. Homer, in his *Garden of Alcinous*, records lovingly its

ὅχναι, καὶ ροά, καὶ μηλέαι ἀγλαόκαρποι,  
συκαὶ τε γλυκεραὶ, καὶ ἐλαῖαι τηλεθώσαι; <sup>1</sup>

King Solomon’s voluptuous epithalamium over the beautiful person of his bride sees in her a garden enclosed, in which grow myrrh and camphire and apples and pomegranates, saffron and calamus and cinnamon and aloes (*Canticles IV.*). Theocritus (XIII. 40) fringes the pool into which Hylas was drawn down by amorous water-nymphs with “glaucous celandine, pale-hued maiden hair, green celery, and spreading marsh flower.” Virgil (*Georg. IV. 127*) contemplated a fifth Georgic on Gardens, and the *pingues horti* of his Corycian old man show how lovingly he would have treated it. The revel in flower-show of our own early poets is first exemplified by Gawain Douglas; for Chaucer, though ecstatic generally over the spring, and specifically over its harbinger the daisy, gives no elaborate floral catalogue. In his *Palace of Honour*, Douglas, after enumerating the colours which paint the meadows, names the flowers which bear them:—

The daisie did unbraid his crownal smale,  
And every flower inlapped in the dale

<sup>1</sup> Pomegranates, pears, the apple blooming bright,  
The honied fig, and unctuous olive smooth.

## ANALYSIS AND ILLUSTRATION 51

The flower-de-luce<sup>1</sup> forth spread his heavenly hue,  
 Flower-damas<sup>2</sup> and columbo black and blue.  
 Sere downis smale on dandelion sprung ;  
 The young green bloom strawberry leaves among ;  
 Gimp gilliflowers their rose leaves unshet,<sup>3</sup>  
 Fresh primrose, and the purple violet.  
 The rosē-knobbis<sup>4</sup> tetand<sup>5</sup> for their head,  
 Gan chip, and kyth<sup>6</sup> their vernal lippis red ;  
 Heavenly lilies, with lockerand<sup>7</sup> toppis white  
 Opened, and shewed their crestis redemite<sup>8</sup>  
 The balmy vapour from their silver croppis<sup>9</sup>  
 Distillant wholesome sugard honey droppis,  
 So that the burgeon, scion, herb, or flower,  
 Were all embalmed of the sweet liquore,  
 And, bathed, did in dulce humoures flete,  
 Whereof the beeis wrought their honey sweete.

Spenser (*Sh. Cal.*, April) bids the shepherd's daughters

Bring hither the pincke and purple callambine  
 With gelliflowers ;  
 Bring coronations and sops in wine,<sup>10</sup>  
 Worne of paramours :  
 Strow me the ground with daffadowndillies  
 And cowslips and king-cups and loved lillies  
 The pretty paunce<sup>11</sup>  
 And the Chevisaunce<sup>12</sup>  
 Shall match with the fayre floure deluce.

Ben Jonson, in his *Pan's Anniversary*, exhorts the rustic maids to :—

<sup>1</sup> All these old writers quote the flower-de-luce. Its identity is uncertain. It is the flower of Louis, adopted into the shield of France by Louis VII. It is apparently an Iris; a white Iris according to Chaucer, whose "Frere" in the Prologue, line 238, had a neck whyt as the flour-de-lys. Douglas, however, speaks of its "heavenly hue." In English Botany it is attributed to *Iris fætidissima*.

<sup>2</sup> Damask-rose.      <sup>3</sup> Opened.      <sup>4</sup> Rosebuds.      <sup>5</sup> Stretched.

<sup>6</sup> Show.      <sup>7</sup> Curling.      <sup>8</sup> Crowned.      <sup>9</sup> Heads.

<sup>10</sup> Clovepinks.      <sup>11</sup> Pansy.      <sup>12</sup> Wallflower.

## “LYCIDAS”

Strew, strew the smiling ground  
 With corn-flags, tulips, and Adonis floure,<sup>1</sup>  
 Fair oxeyes, goldilocks, and columbine,  
 Pinks, goulards,<sup>2</sup> king-cups, and sweet sops-in-wine,  
 Blue harebells, paigles,<sup>3</sup> pansies, calamint,  
 Flower-gentle,<sup>4</sup> and the fair-haired hyacinth ;  
 Bring rich carnations, flower-de-luce, lilies,  
 The chequed and purple-ringed daffodillies,  
 Bright crown imperials, king-spear, bollyhock,  
 Sweet Venus navel,<sup>5</sup> and soft lady-smocks.

Shakespeare’s Perdita (*Winter’s Tale*, IV. iv.) plucks for the two elderly men lavender, mint, savory, marjoram, and marigold; for her young playfellows,

## Daffodils

That come before the swallow dares, and take  
 The winds of March with beauty ; violets, dim,  
 But sweeter than the lids of Junos’ eyes  
 Or Cytherea’s breath ; pale primroses,  
 That die unwedded, ere they can behold  
 Bright Phœbus in his strength, a malady  
 Most incident to maids ; bold oxlips, and  
 The crown imperial ; lilies of all kinds,  
 The flower de luce being one ; oh ! these I lack  
 To make you garlands of, and my sweet friend  
 To strew him o’er and o’er.

With all these Milton’s list may bear comparison. His similar sketch in *P.L.* IV. 692, is less profuse. With the Conventional school which followed hard on Milton, the love of flowers seems to have gone out; it revives in Crabbe and in Shelley, and reaches perfection in Matthew Arnold, perhaps the most Miltonic of modern poets :—

Soon will the high Midsummer pomps come on,  
 Soon will the musk carnations break and swell ;  
 Soon shall we have gold-dusted snapdragon,  
 Sweet William with its homely cottage smell,

---

<sup>1</sup> Pheasants’ eye.   <sup>2</sup> The same word as *gowan*.   <sup>3</sup> Cowslip.  
<sup>4</sup> Love-lies-bleeding.   <sup>5</sup> Cornbell-flower.

## ANALYSIS AND ILLUSTRATION 53

And stocks in fragrant blow ;  
Roses that down the alleys shine afar,  
And open, jasmine-muffled lattices,  
And groups under the dreaming garden trees,  
And the full moon, and the white evening star.

It has been often remarked that Milton's catalogue includes plants which do not flower together; the primrose, rose, jessamine, are not contemporary in flowering. He saw Nature through books, did not worry himself about botanical accuracy, was in fact, unlike Shakespeare, deficient in Naturalist knowledge; perhaps remembered here that Theocritus (v. 130) places together honeysuckle, jasmine, rose, in one couplet. If he sometimes shocks the scientific expert, he correspondingly kindles the literary enthusiast by the classical allusion, obvious or recondite, which in his verse takes the place of accurate personal observation. **The rathe primrose that forsaken dies**, does so because Shakespeare made it die unwedded, and Milton wrote "unwedded" in his first draft (p. 15); slowly fading, that is, and unregarded in presence of richer succeeding bloom. In connecting sad associations with the primrose, the two poets do not stand alone. Herrick, finding them drenched with morning dew, draws from them this moral :—

That things of greatest, so of meanest worth  
Conceived with grieve are, and with tears brought forth.

We remember how in George Herbert's sweet little idyll the night-dews weep the falling rose leaves; and Matthew Arnold, borrowing the phrase from Herrick's charming poem, calls them "orphans of the flowery prime"—earliest, that is, of the year's daughters, having, like Melchisedec, no father, mother, or descent.

The epithet "rathe" = early, is from A.-S. *hreath*,

quick ; whence our "ready." It is used as an adverb by Chaucer (*Miller's Tale*, 582), "why ryse ye so rathe?" Spencer (*Sh. Cal.* xii.) has "thus is my harvest hastened all too rathe," and *F.Q.* III. iii. 28, "too rathe cut off by practice criminal." It appears as an adjective in *The Antiquary*, Vol. II. p. 245, "laying his head in a rath grave," and in *Rokeby*, IV. xi., "and the rath primrose decks the mead," and is used by Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, cix., "the men of rathe and riper years." Its comparative, "rather," is in use now exclusively as an adverb ; but in *Sh. Cal.* II. 83, we read "the rather lambs ben starved with cold." The superlative, "rathest," occurs in Palladius, p. 16, "rathest riping grapes"; and in *Basilikon Doron*, p. 162, "beginning ever rathest at him ye love best." **Of the tufted crowtoe and pale jessamine,** the first is the Bird's-foot Trefoil, *Lotus corniculatus*, with claw-like, spreading legumes, and, in botanical language, "tufted at the base." The Jessamine, *Jasmina officinalis*, was well known in Milton's time. **The white pink** is the common flower of our gardens. Mr Skeat connects the word with the "peaked" edges of the blooms, a derivation which only his authority could make persuasive. Dr Prior more plausibly assigns it to the German *pinksten*, Pentecost, as flowering at Whitsuntide. It is curious, he adds, that a word originally meaning "fiftieth" should stand successively as the name of a festival, of a flower, of a dressmaker's operation known as "pinking," of a colour, of a sword-stab. **The pansy freaked with jet**, the "pretty paunce" of Spenser, the "Love in Idleness" of Shakespeare's courtly apologue, is, from the epithet here applied to it, the Common Heartsease, *Viola tricolor*, of our pastures. Inconspicuous though it be, few flowers command more frequent literary citation. From its coquettishly hanging head and face half concealed it bears in all

languages a host of amatory names. In France it is *menues pensées*, idle thoughts: "there's pansy, that's for thoughts," says poor Ophelia; in Italy *pensieri menuti*, in Germany *unnütze sorge*; in rural England it bears a host of suggestive titles; one of these, meet-her-in-the-entry-and-kiss-her-in-the buttery, the longest plant name surely in any language. "Freaked" is a coined word, short for freckled; the "depaint with freckles red and white" of Douglas. "Jet," = black, is a corrupted form of Gr. and Lat. *Gagates*, from *Gagas*, a town in Asia Minor where this highly compacted coal was found. What particular kind of rose is meant by **Musk-rose**, in this place and in *Comus*, 491, "sweetened every muskrose of the vale," as again in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, "with sweet musk roses and with eglantine," it is difficult to say. Nor need we do more than note that the **well-attired woodbine**—Milton first wrote "garish columbine"—has its summit "tired" (II. Kings ix. 30) with ample terminal heads crowning the stem. The epithet in **cowslips wan** (A.-S. *wann* = colourless) has been challenged as untrue to Nature; yet Shelley, a close observer, speaks of "oxlips pale." **Sad embroidery** is a reminder of "inscribed with woe" in line 106. Lines 149 and 150 are transposed in the original draft. **Amaranthus** is known to us, from false association with *Amor*, as "Love lies bleeding," a dark red bushy flower of no great beauty; but the name is used allegorically by the poets for an immortal fadeless flower (*ἀ-μαράνθιον*). Thus Milton (*P.L.* III. 351) inweaves with amaranth the golden crowns of his adoring angels; and in I. Peter v. 4, "a crown of glory that fadeth not away" is literally "an amaranthine crown." Milton here seems to mix the two, the archetypal flower with its earthly representative.

The next line, **and daffodillies fill their cups**

**with tears**, is difficult. What flowers are meant, and what the tears with which they are to fill their cups, we cannot tell with certainty. The Elizabethan daffadowndilly, daffodilly, daffadil, affodilly, comes apparently from the Fr. *affodille*, itself a corruption of *asphodel*. This last appears in Homer as an adjective. Theocritus (vii. 68) makes Lycidas sit elbow-deep in thyme and asphodel; and the Bacchantes of xxvi. 3, pluck “oakleaves, ivy, and creeping asphodel.” The plant is common in Southern Europe, not to be confounded with the bog-asphodel of our moist hillsides. De Serres, an old French writer on horticulture, recommends as salutary, *les racines d'affodille*, and hence perhaps our Daffodil. But Prior thinks the original English form may have been daffadowndilly, the sapharoun or saffron lily. He quotes from the Sloane MS. 1571:—

The thyrde *lylye* gyt there ys  
Hys levys be lyke to *sapharoun*;

Sapharoun lily would by the popular taste for jingling alliteration be corrupted into daffadowndilly, that shortened into daffodilly, so into daffodil. But what was Milton's daffadilly? To-day the daffodil is universally ranked as a narcissus; but in his first draft (p. 15) Milton wrote, “Next adde Narcissus that still weepes in vayne”; and, five lines later, “Let daffadillies fill thire cups with teares,” making the two flowers distinct. His “weepes in vayne,” applied to Narcissus, seems to indicate Ovid's lovesick youth, who wept himself to death while gazing on his own image in a pool: it may also have been an echo of Virgil's *Narcissi lacrymas*, with which the bees (*G.* iv. 122) build up their combs. But then, what was the Narcissus' tear? and what was the classical Narcissus? In the Athens chorus of Sophocles (*AEd.* Col. 682) it is called *καλλίβοτρυν* :—

θάλλει δ' οὐρανίας ἐπ' ἄχνας  
 ἀ καλλίβοτρυς κατ' ἡμαρ ἀεὶ<sup>1</sup>  
 Νάρκισσος, μεγάλαιν θεαῖν  
 ἀρχαῖον στεφάνωμα.<sup>1</sup>

The “mighty goddesses” are Ceres and Proserpine, the divinities of hell. The root of the word is *ναρκή*, numbness or torpor, connected with the Sanskrit *nark* = hell ; and before the Christian era it was used to deck the bodies of the dead. The Greeks then called the flower “clustering,” and credited it with a narcotic effect, neither of which attributes suit the daffodil. Both suit the hyacinth, and that has been supposed to be the flower meant, though, again, the hyacinth of our gardens was probably not *ἀκίνθος*. Theocritus (x. 128) is thought to mean the gladiolus, as does Moschus (III. 6). Virgil calls the *Narcissus purpureus* = dark coloured, a term which he also applies to blood ; and *sera comans* = late blooming ; neither term appropriate to *Narcissus*. Fée, in his *Flora de Virgilio*, pronounces the first to be *Narcissus poeticus*, an interpretation derided by our horticultural authority, Mr W. Robinson : the last he calls *N. serotinus*, a variety not of the most beautiful kind and difficult of cultivation. Then, if, discarding all these, we fall back upon the hyacinth, what were the “tears” which we suppose Milton to have taken from Virgil, forming with gluten the fundamina of the bees’ combs? In our older poets a flower’s tears stand for the dew which lies upon the petals. “Why do ye weep, sweet Babes?” says Herrick to Primroses bathed in morning dew ; and moralises sadly on the sight. With more discrimination Coleridge tells us that “dewdrops are the gems of morning, but the tears of thoughtful eve.” They

<sup>1</sup> Blooms ever day by day under the dew of heaven the fair-clustering *Narcissus*, time-honoured crown of the mighty goddesses.

cling to our hyacinths and may have been used by bees ; but the inverted cups of our daffodil or Lent Lily could not collect or hold the dew. One flower there is which, apart from dew or rain, fills its own cups with secretive tears, Shelley’s—

That tall flower which wets  
It's mother's face with heaven-collected tears,  
When the low wind's, its playmate's, voice it hears.

This is the Crown Imperial, *Fritillaria imperialis*. At the base of its large inverted bells are six nectariferous cavities closely resembling tears. When Christ walked through the Garden of Gethsemane, said the old flower-fabulists, all the flowers bowed their heads except the Crown Imperial, which stood stiffly and unbending, and has wept for its courtesy ever since. From Shakespeare and others, Milton would have known its name, can hardly have missed seeing it in the Horton cottage gardens ; and I submit that, not perhaps without a glancing memory of *Narcissi lacrymas*, Milton’s weeping daffadilly was the Crown Imperial.

With these, then, he will **strew the laureate hearse** of his dead friend, as Bion, *Epitaphium*, 75, strewed the body of Adonis : βάλλε δέ νιν στεφάνους καὶ ἄνθεστ, “bestrew him with coronals and flowers.” “Hearse” is O.Fr. *herse*=a harrow, whence *rehearse*, to harrow over again. The word came to mean the taper-holding frame over a coffin ; then the tomb ; then the carriage in which, slow through the church-yard path, the remains were borne. “Laureate” is laurel-crowned. In Hucknall-Torkard church lies the body of Byron ; above it no inscription ; but a slab of Greek marble, bearing the poet’s name encircled with a laurel crown in shining brass ; the whole sent by Prince Mavrocordato for his friend’s obsequies. Thus to honour Lycidas with crowns and flowers will be some comfort, will **interpose a little ease**. But with the thought comes its abandonment ; there

## ANALYSIS AND ILLUSTRATION 59

is no tomb to decorate with loving adornments; we do but **dally (trifle) with false surmise.** Thus Anchises in the shades (*Ae*n. VI. 883), calling for heaped Elysian flowers to crown his beautiful descendant, saddens suddenly with the recollection that it is *inane munus*; thus Arnold, idealising his Scholar Gipsy as a living man, nay, meeting him on the Hinksey causeway and the ascent to Cumnor Hurst, breaks off abruptly with a—

But what! I dream: 200 years are flown  
Since first thy story ran through Oxford halls.

So, the bones of Lycidas lie all this time full fathom five; washed whither **by the shores and sounding seas?** northward to **the stormy Hebrides?** along **the bottom of the monstrous deep?** the *belluosis oceanus*, the *monstra natantia*, or the *scatentem belluis pontum*—monsters of the deep—water seething with monsters—of Horace (*Od.* I. iii. 18; III. xxvii. 26; IV. xiv. 47)? the monsters hidden by it under its smooth surface—of Virgil, *Ae*n. VI. 729? or, **still to our moist (tearful) vows denied**, are they floating southward to the Cornish coast? **The fable of Bellerus old** is the Land's End, named by the Roman geographers, Bellerium, from a supposed Cornish hero. Milton first wrote “Corineus old,” fabled companion of Brut, eponym of Cornwall, whose name still lingers in Cirencester, “Corineus’ camp.” There, beyond the Land’s End, sits **the Great Vision of the Guarded Mount**, the reported apparition of St Michael’s Mount, where the Archangel Michael has been seen by voyagers sitting on the Rock which bears his name; “guarded” by his presence or by its ancient encompassing wall which still remains. An unbroken line of sea stretches to the coast of Spain,

Then Cornwall creepeth out into the western main,  
As, lying in her eye, she pointeth still at Spain,  
says Drayton (*Polyolbion*, XXIII.). The spot indi-

cated in line 162 is between 400 and 500 miles away ; but an archangelic eye could no doubt penetrate to **Namanco's and Bayona's hold**, marked in old maps on the western coast near C. Finisterre. The Archangel is besought to “look homeward”; to turn his eyes from distant Spain, to “look with ruth” (M.E. *rewen* = to pity) on the mourners here at home ; and, if the lost one's bones are off his island shore, to bid Arion's dolphins **waft the hapless youth** to his friends.

## STROPHE X. [Apotheosis.]

*Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no  
more,* 165

*For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,  
Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor.  
So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,  
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,  
And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled  
ore* 170

*Flames in the forehead of the morning sky :  
So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,  
Through the dear might of Him that walked the  
waves,*

*Where, other groves and other streams along,  
With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,* 175  
*And hears the unexpressive nuptial song,  
In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.  
There entertain him all the Saints above,  
In solemn troops, and sweet societies,  
That sing, and singing in their glory move,* 180  
*And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.*

## ANALYSIS AND ILLUSTRATION 61

*Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more ;  
Henceforth thou art the genius of the shore,  
In thy large recompense, and shalt be good  
To all that wander in that perilous flood.*      185

This beautiful change of tone is imitated from Spenser, *Sh. Cal.* XI.

Dido is dead ! but, into heaven hent,  
She raignes a goddesse now among the Saintes.  
I see thee, blessed soul, I see  
Walke in Elysian fields so free :  
There lives shee with the blessed Gods in blisse,  
There drinckes shee Nectar with Ambrosia mixt,  
And joy enjoys that mortal men do misse.

**Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead.** “Your sorrow,” = “cause of your sorrow,” is the *tua cura*, “cause or subject of your care,” of *Ecl. I.* 58. The whole sounds perhaps an echo further back than Spenser, from the ancient hymn of Callistratus :—

φίλτατ' Ἀρμόδι, ὃν τί πον τέθνηκας,  
νήσαις μὲν μακάρων σέ φασιν εἶναι.<sup>1</sup>

**So sinks the Day-star in the Ocean bed** is the *Sol. Oceano subest* of Horace, *Od. IV. V.* 40, yet more closely of Theocritus, *xiii. 49* :—

κατήρικε δ' ἐς μέλαν Ϛῶρ  
ἀθρόος ὡς ὅτε πυρσὸς ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ ἥριπεν ἀστήρ  
ἀθρόος ἐν πόντῳ.<sup>2</sup>

**In repairs his drooping head,** “repairs” is a Latinism; *damna tamen celeres reparant cælestia*

<sup>1</sup> Not, loved Harmodius, ours to mourn thee dead,  
Throned art thou in the Islands of the Blest

<sup>2</sup>                  And down he fell,  
All of a sudden, into that black well ;  
So drops a bright star sudden from the sky,  
To sea.

*luna* (*Od.* IV. vii. 13), "loss in the heavens the waxing moons repair," adopted by Gray (Bard 137), "to-morrow he repairs the golden flood," **Tricks his beams**, sets out, shows; "trick" is Dutch *trek*=draw out; so came to mean "set out to advantage"; in *Il Penseroso*, 125, the morn is "not tricked and flounced." "Spangle" in **new-spangled ore** is a diminutive of M.E. *spang*, a metal clasp, hence any shining ornament. "Ore" is A.-S. *ar*, = brass, connected with *iron*, and with Latin *aer*, not apparently with *aurum*. **Forehead** is applied in *Comus*, 733, not to the sky but to the sea—"the unsought diamonds would so emblaze the forehead of the deep"; and *Childe Harold*, IV. 182, has "Time writes no wrinkle on thine iron brow." **Oozy locks** is from A.-S. *wase*=moisture; in M.E. it is *wase*, applied to the mud of the sea bottom; whence *osier*, a plant growing in moist ground. Everyone must have been thrilled by lines 172-81, which paint the euthanasia of the dead shepherd. As once before, the poem here minglest classical with biblical imagery, rising from the **nectar pure** which was the Homeric beverage of Olympus to the **unexpressive nuptial song**, the mystic epithalamium of the Apocalypse XIX. 6-9, while the exquisite closing line, **and wipe the tears for ever from his eyes**, is an adaptation from Isaiah XXV. 8, and Rev. VII. 17. With it we shall perhaps think that the Strophe might have ended; in the four lines which follow is something of the anti-climax discerned by Addison in the two closing lines of *Paradise Lost*. The curious word "unexpressive," = *ineffable*, is used earlier by Milton in his *Hymn on the Nativity*, 116, "harping in loud and solemn quires with unexpressive notes." Shakespeare has it in *As you Like It*, III. i. 28; "the fair, the chaste, the unexpressive She." In the **Genius of he Shore** we relapse again from Scriptural to

## ANALYSIS AND ILLUSTRATION 63

pagan imagery. The Genius was the tutelary spirit of a person or of a place. Shakespeare uses it more than once in the former sense; "the Genius and the mortal instruments are then in Council" (*J. Cæsar*, I. i.). Milton quotes it in *Il Penseroso*, 154, "the unseen Genius of the wood;" dismisses it from the advent of the new-born Christ, *Hymn Nat.* 116:—

From haunted spring, and dale  
Edged with poplar pale,  
The parting Genius is with sighing sent;

should perhaps not have revived it here. The invocation to the spirit of the wrecked voyager to succour wanderers on the shore, may be due to a Latin eclogue by Sannazaro, the "Christian Virgil" at the Court of Naples in the sixteenth century, *numen aquarum semper eris, semper lætum pescantibus omen*, "the Genius of the waters ever shalt thou be, to fishers ever a protecting sign"; perhaps to Virgil, *Ecl. VI.* 64, where Menalcas prays that dead Daphnis will be good to his fellow-swains, *sis bonus, o felixque tuis*. In **large recompense**, large is Latin *largus* = bountiful.

- help

### STROPHE XI. [Epilogue.]

*Thus sang the uncouth swain to the oaks and rills,*  
*While the still morn went out with sandals grey :*  
*He touched the tender stops of various quills,*  
*With eager thought warbling his Doric lay :*  
*And now the sun had stretched out all the hills,*      190

*And now was dropped into the western bay.*  
*At last he rose, and twitched his mantle blue :*  
*To-morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new.*

The ecstasy of the verse has spent itself; we close with a resumption of the pastoral machinery. Modestly the poem is ascribed to an **uncouth swain**, some Hobbinol or Colin, the accepted lay figure of bucolic minstrelsy or dialogue. “Uncouth” is = unknown, negative of *cuth* = known, from A.-S. *cunnan*, whence *ken*. The notion of odd or strange, as in *uncanny*, was attached to it later. In *L'Allegro*, 5, “some uncouth cell” bears the original meaning. “Swain,” A.-S. *swan*, means a lad, allied to Gothic *swing* = strong. The swain is supposed to have begun his song at early dawn, when **the still morn went out with sandals grey**. So in *Paradise Regained*, IV. 427, “Morning fair came forth with pilgrim steps in amice grey.” All day long he had piped, and sung his **Doric lay**. “Doric,” from the Dorian founders of pastoral poetry (p. 10); as, in Theocritus’ epithalamium to Helen, 47, the bridesmaids carve on a plane tree, “in Doric characters legibly,” the legend σέβου με, ‘Ελένας φυτὸν ἔιμι, “hallow me, for I am Helen’s tree.” **He touched the tender stops of various quills.** “A stop” is the pressure of a musician’s finger on the string of a stringed instrument or the orifice of a pipe, in order to stop the sound. In *Comus*, 345, we have “sounds of pastoral reed with oaten stops,” and in Drayton’s *Muses’ Elysium* “teaching every stop and key to those that on the pipe do play.” We remember also the opening of Collins’ *Ode to Evening*, “if aught of oaten stop or pastoral reed.” In Milton’s time a “quill” attached to a piece of wood was employed for playing on the Virginals; as anciently, under the name of *Plectrum*, on the lyre. Horace, *Od.* I. xxvi. 11, prays the Muse to immortalise his friend Lamia *Lesbio plectro*, with quill of Lesbos, the home of Sappho and Alcæus, and speaks of the latter by name as “sounding deep tones with golden quill.” So then the day had

## ANALYSIS AND ILLUSTRATION 65

passed, the strain was completed, **the sun had stretched out all the hills**; had changed from west to east the shadows which they threw, *Sol ubi montium mutaret umbras*, says Horace, *Od. III. vi. 41*, "had shifted the shadows of the hills," or, more exactly, Virgil, *Ecl. I. 84*, *majoresque cadunt altis de montibus umbræ*, "the shadows fall longer from the mountain tops." It **was dropped into the western bay**; the shepherd felt the evening cool; **twitched** (A.-S. *twiccan*) **his mantle blue**, drew together his cloak, blue traditionally from the time of Spenser to the "little boy blue" of our nurseries, and departed, like Mæris at the close of *Ecl. IX.*, with a promise of further song, **to-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new**, almost in the words of Phineas Fletcher (*Purple Island*, VI. lxxvii.),

Home, then, my lambs, the falling drops eschew,  
To-morrow shall we feast on pastures new.

The promise was not to be fulfilled. Twenty years of passionate prose polemic were to be followed by the immortal poetic achievement of Milton's life; but his pastoral, his lyric Muse, had sung her last. Over that Swan-song let us all say Grace.









## DATE DUE

		DEC 05 1990 LIB'D Dec 12 1991 LIB'D Dec 13 1990
DEC 10 1992		LIB'D
OCT 30 1994	DEC 03 1992	
OCT 31 1994	NOV 15 1994	
	NOV 29 1994	
	JAN 11 1995	
	JAN 11 1995	
	DEC 17 1996	12.70
	DEC 09 1998	
201-6503	Printed in USA	4 1984

PR 3558 .T8  
Tuckwell, William, 1829-  
Lycidas : a monography. --

010101 000



0 1163 0063606 9  
TRENT UNIVERSITY

PR3558 .T8

Tuckwell, William  
"Lycidas"

**RECON**

DATE

ISSUED TO

87666

Tuckwell, W.

**87666**

